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Families and Leisure

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Abstract

Until comparatively recently in history, there was no such thing as family leisure. Today, the family home represents the dominant setting of leisure in spite of numerous other recreational offerings. Family life and leisure, however, grow fragmented as most of leisure in the family is individual or couple-oriented. This fragmentation notwithstanding, contemporary leisure and the family are thoroughly interwoven. Patterns of leisure in the family differ according to the types of marriage (traditional or non-traditional), and are influenced by the division of family labour which includes income-earning, household and childcare obligations. Furthermore, patterns of leisure participation by individual family members and by the family as a group vary with the stage of the family life cycle. Men and women participate in leisure unequally in terms of (a) the time allocated to leisure in general, and to specific activities in particular, (b) the frequency of participation in leisure activities, (c) the number and composition of other participants engaged in activities with the wife or husband, and (d) the reasons why the overlap increases or decreases during the lifetime. One-parent families usually face additional constraints on leisure pursuits by all family members. Most immigrant families opt for familial leisure where, as in a "family bubble", they can be sheltered from an unfamiliar world. Participation in family leisure can have both positive and negative effects on the family. On the one hand, it may enhance the quality of marital and familial life and relationship, and contribute to the socialization of children. On the other hand, it can become a potential arena of family conflict, and function as a debilitating or centrifugal force that could harm the family.

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Leisure Throughout History: An Overview

While the family as a social institution has lived in one form or another from the dawn of the existence of human societies, the same cannot be said about leisure. In simple social systems life appears relatively seamless and undifferentiated as it flows without clear boundaries among activities such as production of goods, family life, child-rearing, music and dance, and affective expression of relationships; the clear divisions between work and play, home and workplace, duty and choice almost disappear in time, place, mode of behaviour, companions, and even mood (Mead, 1928; Kelly, 1982).

In North America, leisure of the early settlers included pursuits from circuses to courting, from sober meetings to wild and violent debauches, as well as survival-related pursuits such as fishing and hunting (Kelly, 1982). The large illiterate population was cut off from many kinds of activities taken for granted by the elite. On the frontier, where men outnumbered women, and the chances of marriage were small for most of these men, many means of entertainment did not require companions other than men. A good deal of leisure was related to work and involved making some kind of game of the tasks around it.

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The leisure of people living in towns was enriched by the availability of neighbours, regular social interchange on the streets, around school and church, and the ease of visiting. Community events were a regular and expected part of the weekly round. Those who came to the New World as family units had to develop their own leisure, often by making games of some chores, learning to play musical instruments, and taking advantage of the area by fishing and exploring. Because of an influence by the Puritans, even sport was accepted rather as discipline and training than purely for enjoyment. Some particular forms of leisure have been closely associated with the design, layout, and equipment of the family home. For example in earlier times, many drawing rooms in family homes were lit only by one good lamp, therefore one designated reader would sit under it and read aloud for the whole family.

In the early industrial city the social timetable was no longer based on the cycles of the year; life for many was reshaped by the long work week and overpowering conditions in mines, factories, and most shops. The tensions and fatigue led many to use their free time to try to forget the monotony of work, perhaps to escape to the neighbourhood bar, especially when the tenement was crowded. There were no parks, playing fields, or other recreation areas near those tenements. Women had even fewer places to go; most of them had to make do with the space of their rooms and front steps (Kelly, 1982).

Thus, until recently there was effectively no such thing as family recreation; what little leisure men and women had was spent chiefly in the company of their own sex (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Parker, 1976). The past did not represent a golden age in which family leisure reached a peak from which there has been a subsequent decline. Only in the most recent past, a century or more ago, the family unit included leisure of its members. It is quite possible that today's families produce more of their own recreation than did families in the past, and that most likely the family function of 'consuming' recreation is today greater than ever (Parker, 1976).

Today, the family home represents the main setting for relaxation in spite of a vast array of clubs, sports centres, parks and commercial entertainments which are available to attract people away from the comforts of home (Glyptis and Chambers, 1982). Community life is being displaced by the immediate family as a social context for leisure. Family life itself, however, grows fragmented in favour of individual life and leisure styles (Goldman and Dickens, 1984); leisure in families, for the most part, is individual or couple-oriented, not group-oriented (Larson, 1971). Contemporary families typically accommodate a variety of leisure demands; individual and communal activity, or several simultaneous activities of different members, each with their own space.

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The Family-Leisure Interweave

Contemporary leisure and family life are thoroughly interwoven. The family is the milieu in which most of us first learn to play, and two-thirds of all leisure interests we ever develop are initially practised with other family members (Roberts, 1981). The family functions as a context of, and a group for leisure learning and activities. It is almost impossible to draw clear boundaries between leisure and other family activities.

Patterns of family leisure, however, are not uniform; they vary greatly between traditional and non-traditional types of marriage, and develop and dynamically change over the stages of the family life cycle. While leisure is associated with pleasure and discretionary time, these conditions can be found either alone or with others, with one's spouse, and with little or no interaction, despite the presence of others (Orthner, 1975). In the traditional marriage, the world of the man is extra-domestic; his interests and pursuits, his primary allegiance, and his leisure activities are carried out within this world. The wife/homemaker pursues leisure which is domestic, unindividuated, occurs in the home, and is virtually undifferentiated from the ordinary round of life. For the employed wife, leisure in any form may be totally lacking. In contrast, the non-traditional marriage and family are characterized by joint marital organization which does not simply make time available for leisure, especially women's, but also supports equality of marital partners (Bell and Healey, 1973). If the couple is moving toward companionship in family life, then the leisure factor is of critical importance.

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Leisure within the family circle is found to be preferred by most participants, when not forced upon them (Horna, 1985a; Scheuch, 1960). It can, however, have both positive and negative effects on family relationships. Leisure may function either as a bonding factor in families, or as a divisive element in family life. Leisure may be not only a source of opportunity for family togetherness, but also a potential arena of conflict and a centrifugal force encouraging family members to pursue their interests independently (Hantrais, 1982). Thus leisure can work in two ways: on the one hand it might bring out family conflicts, on the other hand it can help to deal with, and perhaps eradicate those con-

flicts. Family leisure may become more or less a bonding element between the spouses, or between the parents and their children. It can enhance or lower the quality of marital and familial relationships and the degree of marital satisfaction.

One of the major factors affecting leisure of the family and its individual members is related to the obligations stemming from the members' employment, household, and childcare. Differences exist in the husband's or wife's total workload which includes outside employment of one or both spouses (Horna, 1989; Horna and Lupri, 1987). The majority of fathers work full time and most of them carry the major portion of responsibility for earning the family income. In spite of the significant increase of women in the labour force their economic contribution to the family is often reduced by irregular or part-time employment, and by interruptions resulting from child bearing and child rearing responsibilities.

Several researchers have shown that whatever the type of a mother's employment, she still has the main responsibility for child care and housework; although some fathers help, most do not. This is true even when the wife is well educated and employed outside the home, and the husband is unemployed (Duvall and Miller, 1985; Eriksen, Yancey, and Eriksen 1979; Oakley, 1974). Main differences are found between the hours which husbands and wives contribute to the housework. Married women spend most of their time on the family and household obligations, but get less free time in comparison with their husbands (Geerken and Gove, 1983; Horna, 1983, 1989; Horna and Lupri, 1987; Meissner et al., 1975; Petherick and Sametz, 1984). Fathers not only spend less time doing housework, they rarely carry the full responsibility, since they usually share it with their wives. Often, the wife's employment status does not influence husbands in the early morning hours. Whatever contribution the husbands make, it occurs most likely in the evening, immediately after dinner, when the wife is tied up in postdinner chores.

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When family and house tasks and duties are divided between the spouses, their tasks are not symmetrical (Horna, 1983), but are divided traditionally: women are responsible for the family and child related matters and the household chores including shop-

ping, while men mostly do repairs and maintenance or take care of occasional larger purchases. Often when husbands help with the domestic work, they are found in activities which resemble leisure. If children help, then they are most likely to pitch in by cleaning the house, though this is often simply cleaning up after themselves.

Similarly, men and women face different types of interference or barriers to leisure. Women's leisure is curtailed most of all by their children's needs. Women view their maternal obligations as the most frequent limiting factor, with work and "other" in the second place. If men report barriers to their leisure at all, then they come primarily from the work outside the home, and much less from children. Also the reported frequency of interference of the family and household with leisure is greater among women than men.

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Men and women also perceive specific activities differently. When asked which of their activities would be defined "leisure", "work", a "mixture of work and leisure" or "neither work nor leisure", some activities, such as cooking, home chores, shopping, child care and travel, are much more frequently defined as leisure by men than by women (Horna, 1989; Horna and Lupri, 1987; Shaw, 1984). It is argued that this is probably because men, in general, do feel less obligation and more freedom of choice of activities than do women.

In sum, patterns of family leisure are related to the types of marriage, and influenced by the division of family labour and free time, between the spouses. Moreover, family leisure may become a more or less bonding element between the spouses, or between the parents and their children. It can also enhance or lower the quality of marital and familial relationships.

The Family Life Cycle and the Streams of Leisure Learning

Another significant factor in family leisure stems from the stage in the family life cycle. Several researchers found that specific stages tend to be distinctive in the leisure lives of most people. Many people first meet their future spouse at some leisure function (sports, dance, voluntary association). Upon marriage, some couples create their joint leisure pattern by combining into one pursuit the original "his" and "hers". The majority, however, never face such a need, because they were already well matched before marriage. Those individuals who change their former leisure patterns after marriage do not abandon the earlier pursuits but, rather, add new ones to them. The most typical instance of expanded leisure does not happen across the activity-type boundaries, but consists of adding a new sport to the earlier sport pursuits or a new cultural interest to the former cultural repertoire.

The major turning point in married peoples' leisure is parenthood. The transition to parenthood is found to have a powerful effect on young couples' recreation patterns, particularly curtailing women's leisure activities (Horna, 1987a; Kelly, 1983; Lupri and Mills, 1987; Meissner et al., 1975; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Rapoport, Rapoport, and Strelitz, 1977; Shaw, 1984; Young and Willmott, 1975). A survey of married Calgarians (Horna, 1985a, 1987a) shows that parenthood affects people primarily in terms of time available or not available for pursuing leisure activities, and makes them search for activities in which parents can participate with children according to the children's age.

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Two periods can be distinguished during the parenthood stage of the family life cycle. The first period, with small children, is usually coupled with decreased family income and increased requirements of the household, which can seriously limit the amount and scope of leisure. Such leisure activity as there is, tends to take place around the home (Rapoport, Rapoport, and Strelitz, 1977). Specifically, during the early years of parenting factors such as typically tight financial conditions, and the fact that husbands and wives tend to be stretched physically to meet occupational and child-rearing demands lead to a decrease of activities outside the home and a withdrawal into the home, first

among women, then men. During this period most couples resort to sedentary activities, watching television, handiwork or tinkering around the house, and visits spent in conversations or card playing with friends with similarly aged children. Although this stage does not necessarily mean an increase in joint activities, many parents at this stage express a growing preference for activities that can be pursued within the family unit, often at the expense of their former individual activities. They particularly prefer activities that encourage togetherness and facilitate intrafamily communication and child socialization. A complementary trend is found among some young mothers/homemakers because of their exhaustion from full-time parenting. They express the need for some time off which can be spent separately from other family members, most frequently in sports and fitness or educational pursuits.

The second period of parenthood, with older children, is typically spent in leisure still pursued as a family unit, occasionally with only one parent participating, while the other may be involved in non-leisure activities or individual leisure. Since many women continue or re-enter the labour force and numerous men change their work career during this period, the couple may not gain more free time but can use the available hours with greater discretion. This is the period when couples return to their former, temporarily suspended leisure forms. Considerable numbers of both women and men return to their childhood and youth activities (or activities they wanted then but could not do), and start introducing their children to these activities as well. The growing-up children still participate in some leisure pursuits with their parents, particularly on vacations and family outings, but start using leisure as their main testing ground of freedom, the search for personal identity and independence.

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This part of the parenting stage gradually evolves into postparenthood. If most young parents feel that the arrival of their first child represented a rather clear and abrupt change of their former lifestyle and placed them into a different category practically overnight, middle age does not start like that - on a specific day or even during a certain year. Judging from numerous in-depth interviews, middle-aged people themselves cannot pinpoint any particular event that marked their entry into the middle age category (Horna, 1987b). One of the first things most middle-

aged couples realize about their new life stage is that they no longer lack free time as much as previously. Almost three quarters of them report having the same amount or more free time at their disposal than they had five years earlier. The major reason for this change, however, varies between the wives and their husbands. Women who experience an increase in their free time attribute that increase to having fewer family obligations; those who experience a decrease, attribute it to new or extended employment obligations. Changes in family size and accompanying obligations, however, do not have a similar effect on men's free time. Whether middle-aged men experience more or less free time, the change is primarily tied to their changing work situation.

Leisure activities during this period differ little from those pursued during the later part of parenthood; they represent a continuation of the former familiar forms, perhaps pursued less vigorously. In this stage, for example, people may take nature walks instead of participating in active sports, cross-country instead of downhill skiing, more television and reading, or perhaps, they may add golf to their list of pursuits. The couple may pursue more joint or parallel activities, but very few fundamentally new forms of leisure.

Upon retirement from the labour force (or the husband's retirement which affects his homemaking wife as well) couples seldom decrease leisure activities for reasons other than poor health or financial constraints. With the exception of women who return to voluntary work of a different kind because of their need for social contact and learning experience, very few report more or different leisure pursuits.

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One characteristic that naturally continues throughout all stages of the family life cycle, whether associated with no change in specific activities or with a change in particular pursuits and preferences, is the fluctuation of other participants: friends who come and go, the parents who are left behind, children who are born into the family and later leave their nest. The striking fact is that these co-participants virtually always pursue similar activities and have similar leisure preferences.

The other characteristic throughout all stages relates to the ways people are introduced to leisure activities. The data (Horna, 1987)

overwhelmingly document that most women and men presently pursue those leisure activities which they started very early in life, most frequently with their parents and childhood peers, or in various youth organizations; schools were less significant as a leisure facility. In adulthood, people are usually initiated by their friends or they "just stumbled into it". At a glance, it might appear that quite a few married women and men change their leisure patterns. A closer look at the specific types of leisure pursuits, however, shows that in reality only very few have switched to entirely different activities; the overwhelming majority has kept the same types or added something new of a similar kind to the old ones.

Moreover, particularly younger respondents note additional pursuits that are precipitated by the current fitness programs, home computers and VCRs. Men's reading habits are tied to new technology, as many read only technological literature and magazines in order to keep abreast with the times, while most women continue to read books and magazines in line with their original preference.

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In sum, the stages of the family life cycle represent a significant factor in family leisure patterns. Although parenting does not necessarily mean an increase in joint activities, many parents express a growing preference for leisure which can be pursued within, or with the family unit. Most individuals are introduced to specific types of leisure pursuits and preferences early in life, most frequently with their parents and childhood peers, and continue to follow the original stream of activities without major modifications during the next life cycle stages.

Leisure Patterns in Two-Parent Families

What particular activities do married people pursue in their leisure and how are they involved with their spouses and children? More than 25 years ago Erwin Scheuch (1960) described that the prevailing pattern of spending leisure time proved to be staying inside the home, whether pursuing solitary activities or interacting with family members, while outside activities were much rarer but still predominantly familial in character. The family was relatively more important for leisure during weekends than on workdays. In the United States (Kelly, 1978a), marriage intimacy, reading, and family activity lead all activity rankings. A survey of camping at east-coast seashore camp sites (Dynes, 1977) shows that, contrary to the frequent assumption that fathers exclude their family from outside activities, in reality the fathers interact relatively more with their families outside than inside the home.

The secondary analysis of the data collected by Alberta Recreation and Parks in 1984, carried out by this author, reveals that leisure participation among couples aged 25 to 54 is primarily related to the presence of children and to the urban or rural type of residence. Couples with children have higher participation rates than childless couples in all areas of leisure: cultural activities, social-relational activities, entertainment at home as well as outside the home, fitness and sport-oriented activities, and hobbies and crafts. [See Table 1]. Urban households rank higher than rural households only in some activities, most likely because of lower availability of cultural facilities in the country. Total participation rates, however, may be misleading since there is a clear difference between regular and occasional participation rates. When the rates of "regular participation" are examined, the data show that it is higher in cultural activities and fitness among urban couples; couples with children have higher general rates; entertainment outside the home is slightly more frequent among childless couples; highest rates are for entertainment at home and for social-relational activities while cultural and mostly sport-oriented activities suffer from low participation rates. 'Occasional participation' is also generally higher among couples with children; urban households have higher rates than their rural counterparts in most activities; entertainment outside the home

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has higher rates among couples with children; sports remain low on the chart. Overall, the rates of occasional participation are much higher than regular participation rates. It cannot be concluded, however, that the higher participation rates among couples with children are caused by parenting; such factors typically associated with the parenting stage of the life cycle such as a younger age and better health can contribute to higher rates of leisure pursuits as well.

Horna's survey of Calgarians' leisure behaviour (Horna, 1983, 1985a, 1985b; Horna and Lupri, 1987) shows that television viewing is the most prevalent activity even when sport programs are not included in the count. Reading ranks among the most frequent leisure activities, particularly on workdays. Similarly, individual and team sports and physical exercise take place preferably on workdays. Hobbies, crafts, and gardening are more popular among women, and are pursued on all days of the week. Unlike men who watch sports (including television broadcasts) more often and for longer periods, only a few women watch sports at all. Also, listening to the radio, records and tapes while doing nothing else is more frequent among men than women in general. While television viewing, commercial entertainment, movies and theatre are primarily couple or family activities, most of the other leisure types are pursued by only one member of the family.

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An individual parent's leisure pursuits with the spouse and/or children, particularly the length of time spent in games and play, vary between fathers and mothers. Moreover, the frequency of playing with their children "often" varies between the mothers and fathers. These differences are found also when controlling for the wife's employment status. Rather surprisingly, more husbands of non-employed wives than husbands of full-time working mothers play often with their children, with part-time workers' husbands similar to homemakers' spouses. These rates are more likely related to the child's age than to the mother's employment status, since mothers of young children work outside the home least often. Mothers, regardless of their employment status or the child's age, are more active than their spouses nevertheless. Gender-differentiated participation takes place also in the semi-leisure or semi-work area; more than a half of the mothers (but very few fathers) report having started various

voluntary activities namely at the child's school, associations, and clubs, primarily because of their child's needs.

The fathers' lower rate of participation in children's games is seldom compensated for by involving the child in some of the fathers' own leisure activities. Fewer than ten percent of fathers take their children along to active sports and physical exercise, to spectator sports, movies and other commercial entertainment, or share hobbies with them. At the same time, about one-quarter to one-third of the fathers report being involved with no one else, whether in sports and physical exercise or spectator sports. In contrast to their spouses, mothers' participation with no one else stands at 5.3 percent in spectator sports. According to the interviews, many fathers would like to participate in leisure activities with all family members as a family unit, but only few can or do so. It appears that fathers in particular pursue leisure outside the family, although not necessarily due to a lack of interest in their children.

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Among the middle-aged couples, their most frequent activities include hobbies, reading, watching television, and sports both active and spectator (Horna, 1985a, 1987b). On the whole, they differ very little from activities in the previous stage of the family life cycle, only perhaps are pursued less vigorously, while they continue to vary between women and men. Thus, it can be summarized that there is considerable family participation in leisure, whether joint or parallel; it is found most frequently in sports, hobbies, TV viewing, and entertainment including movies (particularly among couples with young children at home). Leisure activities with consistently high participation rates and large time expenditures are those that can be broadly characterized as "sociability", social interaction, or companionate. There is, however, no mirror-like pattern of family and leisure relationship which would have an identical form for men and women.

As schematically illustrated by the graph [See Figure 1], men tend to devote less of their time to family obligations and household chores, take more time for their individual leisure pursuits, especially spectator and active sports. Women, on the other hand, spend more time on household chores, practical hobbies and crafts, and play more with their children. Consequently, the overlap of men's and women's family and leisure varies by (a) the time allocated to leisure in general, and to specific activities in particular, (b) the frequency of participation in leisure activities, (c) the number and composition of other participants engaged in activities with the wife or husband, and (d) the reasons why the overlap increases or decreases during the lifetime.

Leisure Patterns in One-Parent Families

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There has been little published about leisure trends in one-parent families. However, the public, scholars, and other authorities alike are expressing a growing concern about the one-parent (also called single-parent or lone-parent) family. It is generally believed that the numbers of families with only one parent are rapidly increasing and bringing about an unprecedented modification of family life. While the absolute numbers are indeed growing, the relative proportion of these families among all Canadian families is in fact lower than at the time of the 1931 census [See Table 2]. In 1981, 714,000 families, i.e. 11.3 percent of all families in Canada, were headed by one parent only, while 291,943 families in 1931 comprised 13.6 percent of all families (Statistics Canada, 1984). One-parent families have always existed, although in the past mostly due to higher mortality, not because of separation, divorce or conception outside marriage, as is the case today. In particular the concentration of divorces within the 25-44 age group contributes to the high number of children being raised by only one parent, most frequently the mother.

A very detrimental effect of the absence of the other parent (most often the father) is not only the lack of a male presence and male role model, but the lack of a second income or the mother's lower income (Boyd, 1988; Cherlin, 1981). A lone-parent's lower income negatively affects the living standard of the family, and

impinges upon those leisure activities that are not available free of charge. Furthermore, being solely or primarily responsible for supporting themselves and their children, single mothers can become overwhelmed by their responsibilities, and suffer from a lack of free time to be spent in leisure with their children.

There are no specific data available on leisure patterns in one-parent families. The limited amount of information at our disposal suggests that single mothers in particular tend to spend more time at home or in the neighbourhood, and to socialize primarily with other single mothers. Single fathers, on the other hand, seem to rely more on public facilities and their female relatives (O'Brien, 1987). It may be assumed that, parallel to constraints of educational and occupational opportunities for children in lone-parent families (Statistics Canada, 1984), the role overload with which single parents must cope can have a negative impact on their familial leisure.

Leisure Patterns in Immigrant Families

Forms of family leisure, whether informal interaction or organized outings, get-togethers, and celebrations, appear to vary with ethnicity and race, most significantly in the first generation of immigrants. Several studies suggest that such patterns are an extension of earlier patterns brought over from the family's country of origin (Horna, 1980, 1987a; Schliewen, 1977).

The centrality of leisure and the composition of participating groups change profoundly after migration for most immigrants. (Horna, 1980). In the absence of previous friends and extended family members, while experiencing initial difficulties at making friends with Canadians, most immigrants limit the number of social contacts in leisure time; married couples with children especially withdraw into their nuclear families. They prefer to retreat into the "family bubble" and pursue their leisure interests within it, whether at home or out-of-doors. Symbols such as shared language, dress, food, leisure pursuits, and music, may become a source of familiarity in an unfamiliar world and a means of socialization (Horna, 1980; Kelly, 1982; McKay, 1980). Ethnic food often provides a vital focus of social interaction in the

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family and among friends (Anderson and Alleyne, 1979; Mindel and Habenstein, 1976). In particular, immigrants from countries where kinship networks are very important, are less likely to participate in outside leisure activities (McMillen, 1983).

Other types of ethnic leisure may involve family participation in ethnic groups and multicultural programs that depend largely on voluntary participation and organization by enthusiastic members of immigrant and ethnic groups. As participant observation at numerous ethnic festivals suggests, these events are attended primarily by the "ethnics" or recent immigrants, while members of the mainstream society seldom attend even as spectators.

In sum, the immigrant nuclear family becomes the central place of leisure pursuits as well as the primary participating group. Immigrants' old patterns of association, sport and entertainment serve as a protective cushion in an unfamiliar world (Ishwaran, 1983; Mindel and Habenstein, 1976), particularly among newly arrived non-English speaking immigrants.

Summary and Conclusion

Family leisure, as a distinct part of society's life pattern, has a very limited history. Only in the most recent past, a century or more ago, the family unit had included leisure of its members. Today, the family home represents the dominant setting of leisure in spite of numerous other recreational offerings. Family life and leisure, however, grow fragmented as most of leisure in the family is individual or couple-oriented. This fragmentation notwithstanding, contemporary leisure and the family are thoroughly interwoven. The family is the milieu in which most people develop their leisure interests, preferences, and skills. Patterns of leisure in the family differ according to the types of marriage (traditional or non-traditional), and are influenced by the division of family labour which includes income-earning, household and childcare obligations. Furthermore, patterns of leisure participation by individual family members and by the family as a group vary with the stage of the family life cycle. The major turning point in married people's leisure is parenthood. Two periods of parenthood and associated leisure patterns can be distinguished.

"The family is the milieu in which most people develop their leisure interests, preferences, and skills."

The first period with small children usually limits the amount and scope of leisure; the second expands leisure but seldom brings about profound changes or entirely new activities. In two-parent families, there is considerable family participation in leisure, whether joint or parallel. The most frequent, but not necessarily regular, activities include television viewing, sports, hobbies, commercial entertainment and movies; above all, there is emphasis on social interaction. Men and women participate in leisure with other family members unequally in terms of (a) the time allocated to leisure in general, and to specific activities in particular, (b) the frequency of participation in leisure activities, (c) the number and composition of other participants engaged in activities with the wife or husband, and (d) the reasons why the overlap increases or decreases during the lifetime. In one-parent families, the parent's lower income and role-overload frequently represent major constraints of leisure pursuits by all family members. Most immigrant families opt for familial leisure where, as in a "family bubble", they can continue to use their familiar symbols, language, and pursuits, and be sheltered from an unfamiliar world. The pattern most likely represents a need for a protective cushion, not a lack of willingness to adapt to the new homeland.

The findings on family leisure not only suggest that the family and leisure are inextricably interrelated, but that this type of leisure is desired and preferred by most married adults. Participation in family leisure can, however, have both positive and negative effects on the family. On the one hand, it may enhance the quality of marital and familial life and relationship, and contribute to the socialization of children. On the other hand, it can become a potential arena for family conflict, and function as a debilitating or centrifugal force that could harm the family's well-being. Thus, it is not family leisure itself which could cure the ills of contemporary family as a kind of social panacea. Rather, it is the quality of family leisure, its types and reasons for participation as well as the interests of, and equality of access by participating family members that give family leisure its potential as a positive force in family life.

"Participation in family leisure can...have both positive and negative effects on the family."

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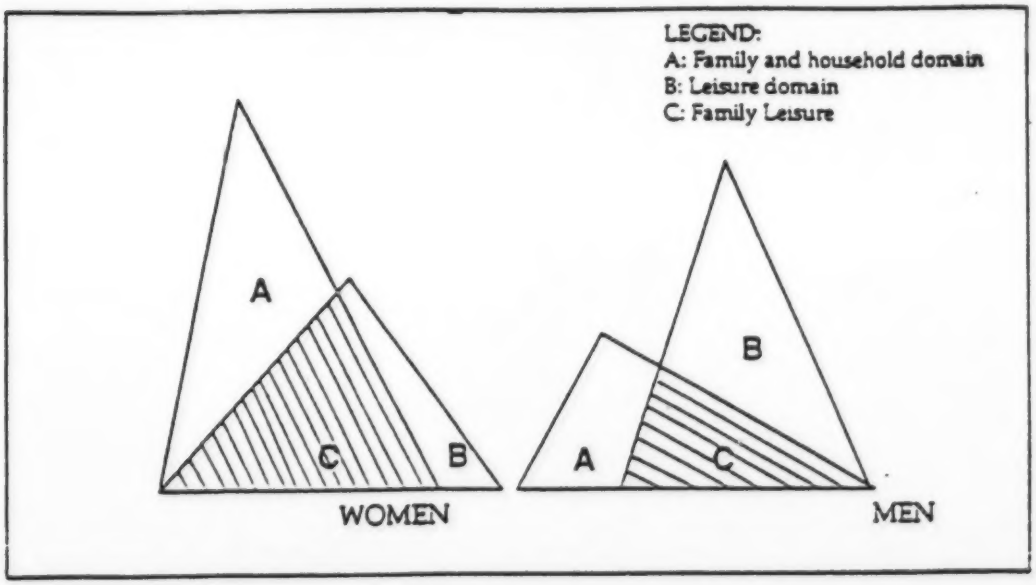
Statistics Canada (1984) Canada's Lone-Parent Families. Ottawa. Figure 1. Co-participants in selected activities, in percent

Figure 1. Schematic representation of women's and men's differential involvement in family and leisure domains.



Source: Horna in Ishwaran (ed.) 1989, page 302.

Table 1. Leisure participation rates, couples 25-54 years old, with or without children, Alberta 1984

Group of Activities	Frequency of participation, in %			
	Occasional		Regular	
	With Child	No Child	With Child	No Child
Urban Households				
Cultural (library, music, drama, course)	55.7	50.6	27.2	17.1
Social-relational (incl. visit, clubs)	38.9	30.5	50.9	42.9
Entertainment at home (incl. reading, TV)	26.3	22.3	76.7	75.5
Entertainment outside home (incl. movies)	58.1	49.0	33.4	34.8
Fitness (incl. walks, jog, aerobics, swim)	44.6	39.1	40.5	29.5
Sports (incl. skate, balls, golf, bowl)	35.8	29.0	12.9	9.6
Hobbies, crafts, garden, home improvement	55.4	47.4	38.2	35.2
Rural Households				
Cultural (library, music, drama, course)	43.5	40.4	22.9	12.0
Social-relational (incl. visit, clubs)	36.7	29.9	55.5	45.3
Entertainment at home (incl. reading, TV)	23.6	20.2	78.0	73.9
Entertainment outside home (incl. movies)	55.7	44.6	33.2	27.9
Fitness (incl. walks, jog, aerobics, swim)	43.1	35.4	35.1	25.0
Sports (incl. skate, balls, golf, bowl)	34.0	23.3	14.1	9.1
Hobbies, crafts, garden, home improvement	50.4	46.2	41.9	36.6

Source: 1984 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation; calculated by this author from the raw data provided by Alberta Recreation and Parks.

Table 2. Lone-parent families, number and percentage of total families, Canada 1931-1981

	Total Families		Lone-Parent Families	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1931	2,149,048	100.0	291,943	13.6
1941	2,509,664	100.0	306,957	12.2
1951	3,287,384	100.0	325,699	9.9
1961	4,147,444	100.0	347,418	8.4
1971	5,070,680	100.0	478,740	9.4
1981	6,324,975	100.0	714,010	11.3

Source: Canada's Lone-Parent Families. Statistics Canada, 1984.

Endnotes

1. Leisure activities can be categorized into four broad groups consisting of the (1) "cultural" and "entertainment" forms - whether popular, mass, or high brow culture - e.g., reading, watching television, music, going to the movies, performing arts, museums, non-credit education; (2) "physical" forms, e.g., sports, physical exercise and fitness, camping, hiking, fishing; (3) "interactive" or "social" forms, e.g., conversations and socializing with the family members and friends, conjugal intimacy, visiting, games, volunteer work; and (4) "manipulative" forms, e.g., hobbies and crafts, like building and tinkering aroun the house, woodworking, knitting and sewing, some cooking and baking, automotives, home computers. Some particular activity forms may in part fall under more than one group, for example going to the movies with the spouse may be a cultural or an interactive event. These activity groups, particularly the fourth category, may include some semi-leisure. (Horna, 1987a)

2. From the viewpoint of health, lifestyles, and the recommended participation in physical fitness, the large proportions of those who are engaged in active sports and physical exercise only sometimes or not at all, should be viewed with concern (75.2 percent of women and 78.0 percent of men).